



Washington Hunting News

FREE

Game Trails

August 2000

Despite Slightly Fewer Birds, Waterfowl Hunting will be Ducky Again

Although not at the record highs of last year, duck and goose numbers from northern breeding areas are high enough to warrant another great waterfowl hunting season. If the weather cooperates, waterfowl hunting will be ducky again this year. The statewide youth waterfowl hunt has been expanded to two days.

In the **eastern** region, hunting for local ducks and geese in the Spokane, Lincoln, and Whitman counties should be excellent. Water has been abundant this year for production, so numbers are as good.

In the south half of the eastern region, resident goose populations are at high levels and should provide excellent hunting along the Snake River.

In **northcentral** region, including the Columbia Basin, May duck pair counts indicated that production will be slightly lower than last year. Due to less water, regardless of how many ducks there are in the flyway, hunting conditions and weather can play more of a role in hunter success than waterfowl abundance.

Goose numbers in the Columbia Basin during the hunting season are determined primarily by the amount of production from local Western Canada geese and migrant lesser Canada geese from Alaska and northern Canada. Local goose production in the Basin was good this spring, but at this writing no migrant information was available.

In the **southcentral** region, ducks should continue to be one of the bright spots in all bird hunting. Local populations remain above the ten year average. The early season should be as good as last year. Late season duck numbers depend on northern populations and the timing of cold air masses. Goose populations also continue to be strong here with local populations on par with 1999.

The **north Puget Sound** region offers unique waterfowl hunting, from snow goose and brant up north to the lightly hunted sea ducks. Waterfowl production from Canada promises to be good and local Canada geese numbers are high, so early season hunting should be good. Snow goose hunting in Skagit County is dependent on the hatch and survival of snow geese on Wrangel Island, Russia, and reports from that area are excellent.

The Port Susan Goose closure remains in effect in Snohomish County. Hunters may hunt Canada Geese early in the season, but then the harvest of Canada Geese is closed to protect a race of dark geese, similar to Dusky Canada geese, that use the mouth of the Stillaguamish at Port Susan Bay.

Disabled hunter access has been added to the Welts property near Samish Island, along with some additional ponds, thanks to Ducks Unlimited. DeBays Slough, managed by Washington Waterfowl Association, Ducks Unlimited, Trumpeter Swan Society, and Skagit Audubon, also provides waterfowl hunting. Lake Terrell

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Successful hunting for Andy Kelso in the 1999 Bighorn Sheep Season

Deer Hunting Looking Good

Most deer populations in Washington are looking good, thanks largely to mild winter conditions. Given the right weather conditions and sufficient pre-season scouting and access arrangements, deer hunting should also be good.

In the **northeast**, another mild winter means the deer population continues to build. Expect good hunting for young bucks one to three years old. In some specific lowland valley or agricultural areas of Stevens County, white-tailed deer numbers have declined due to an outbreak of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) last fall. While the impacts from this were only in localized areas, it was enough to warrant reduction in antlerless permit levels. Many adult bucks were lost in these areas as well. Special either-sex white-tailed deer hunting opportunities continue for Youth/Senior/Disabled hunters during the general buck season.

Mule deer hunting will be best in the Roosevelt unit of northern Lincoln County. Mule deer in northeast Washington have not recovered from the 1996-1997 winter as fast as deer in other areas and chances for success will again be poor.

A new opportunity for Advanced Hunter Education graduates is a white-tailed deer antlerless only season in the central district of the eastern region. Whitman County Game Management Units 139 and 142, including the area around Colfax, are especially in need of deer harvest to alleviate damage problems; WDFW's Spokane regional office will have a list of southern Whitman County landowners willing to allow access not only for AHE hunters, but also archers, youth, seniors, and disabled hunters.

In the **southeast**, the Almota unit in southern Whitman County will be good for mule deer bucks, all on private land. Further south in the Blue Mountains, the best mule and white-tailed deer populations occur along the Snake River breaks and in the foothills (which is mostly private land). Hunters can expect comparable success rates over the last ten years. Deer populations in the mountains have declined significantly over the last five years. Remember, there is a 3-antler-point minimum for both mule and whitetail bucks in units 145 thru 186.

Deer numbers are up in most areas of the **northcentral** region this year. Post season surveys run in December of 1999 indicated exceptionally good buck escapement and ranged from 25-30 per 100 does throughout the region. Spring surveys run in April, 2000, were over 60 fawns/100 adults indicating excellent fawn survival through the winter.

In Chelan County, total deer numbers still appear to be depressed when compared to other areas in the northcentral

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Hunters “Customize Your Rig” and Make a Hunting Statement

Lori Salzer



Personalized license plates allow motorists to “Make a Statement” while they “Make a difference” to Washington’s wildlife. Personalized plates are available for Washington passenger vehicles for \$44, with a yearly renewal fee of \$30. Forty dollars of the initial purchase and the entire renewal fee helps conserve wildlife species through WDFW’s Wildlife Program.

For more information on personalized license plates or to receive an application in the mail, call the Washington Department of Licensing at (360) 902-3770 (option 5). Applications are available at your nearby license vendor or at your local WDFW Regional office. You can also log on to the Department of Licensing web site at www.wa.gov/dol for an electronic application. While you’re on-line, be sure to try the interactive **Inquiry Plate** to see if your personalized statement is available.

Deer Hunting Prospects, *continued from page 1*

region. Winter range in Chelan County remains in relatively poor condition for deer due to the loss of shrubs (winter browse) from fires several years ago.

Although 1999 deer harvest figures were not available at this writing, hunter success at the Chewuch check station near Winthrop was up significantly last year compared to 1998. Mild winters the last three years, antler restrictions, short hunting seasons, and relatively low participation by hunters means that deer numbers and hunting opportunities will be good in the fall of 2000.

In the **southcentral** region, deer herds have had good production and survival, although total deer numbers are still below the long-term average. The set-back was the severe winter of 1996-97, from which herds are still re-building. Hunter success should be much improved over the last two seasons, but still below the long-term average.

Hunters can expect a quality experience with limited competition for the 3-point-or-better animals. The brightest prospects will be in the limited entry units (329/330, 342, 371) where modern firearm permit holders usually score success rates of 60 to 70 percent. The best success has been in units 329 and 330. This year hunters drawing a permit for one of these units can harvest any buck. With the high post season buck ratios, a mild winter, and the change in regulation, these success rates should increase. Hunters should note that units 329, 330, 342, and 371 are limited entry by permit, and do not have a general deer season.

In the **north Puget Sound** region, black-tailed deer hunting occurs mostly in the general season since much of the late buck season are now closed.

Private industrial timberlands provide the best black-tailed deer habitat because the harvest of timber results in clearings and improved forage conditions. Many of these areas have road closures, but hunters can use bicycles, horses, or walk. Hunters can check with landowners about recent timber harvest and locate the 2-to-10-year-old clear cuts for hunting.

GMUs 407 and 410 are island and coastal areas with high human population and little public land so firearm restrictions apply in many areas.

In the eastern portion of the **southwest** region, spring surveys in western Klickitat County indicated 46 fawns per 100 adults. High fawn-to-adult ratios in Klickitat County usually equate to good hunting in the fall. Much of Klickitat County is in dryland wheat production and privately owned so permission to hunt should be obtained well ahead of the season. Gifford Pinchot National Forest, the Klickitat Wildlife Area, and industrial timberlands offer public hunting in western Klickitat County. Both antlerless and buck hunting opportunities have been extended in this part of the region. Deer populations are healthy and deer damage is becoming a problem in some areas.

On the west side of the Cascades in the southwest region, deer numbers are average and hunter success rates are down from past years. The hair loss syndrome continues to cause concern in southwest Washington. Reports of affected deer continue to be widespread. In response to the present uncertainty regarding the ultimate effects on the deer populations, antlerless harvest has been curtailed in several units. Several other units that also have been widely affected by the syndrome will continue to offer antlerless harvest opportunity. The units providing best hunter access, as well as good deer cover and forage, are units 550 (Coweeman), 501 (Lincoln), 505 (Mossyrock), and 530 (Ryderwood). The best areas are lowland wet areas near small clearcuts less than 10 years old. Unit 564 (Battleground) is an either sex unit, but modern firearm restrictions in urbanized area require more planning to find suitable places to hunt.

In the **coastal** region, deer populations have also experienced the hair loss syndrome the last three years. Buck to doe ratios are good throughout the region, particularly in the 2-point antler restriction areas and in areas that roads have been closed and re-seeded after timber harvest.

One of the best units is the Skookumchuck Unit, which includes the Vail Tree Farm. This tree farm typically closes all access roads except weekends during the modern firearm season and this past year during the late archery season. Hunters can walk the roads, but logging traffic can be hazardous and hunters are urged to avoid active logging areas. On the Olympic Peninsula, the Pysht Tree Farm will offer some good opportunities for those willing to pay a modest access fee. The Satsop(651), Capital Peak(663) and Minot Peak(660) units should offer good deer hunting in areas of recent logging. In Pierce County, the White River (472) and Mashel (478) units should provide good deer hunting. Champion’s Kapowsin Tree Farm has good opportunities for those willing to pay a modest access fee.

Black Bear Hunting Good in Most Places

In most areas of the state bear seasons overlap deer and elk seasons, many hunters pick up a bear tag just in case they happen to see a bear while deer or elk hunting.

Northeast Washington’s opening day for the most popular black bear units (GMU’s 101, 105, 109, 113, and 117) is moved back to the day after Labor Day (September 5) for 2000. The August season has been eliminated in these units because of over-harvest. There is still a good bear population and hunter success should be high.

Wild berry production is a critical factor in the bears feeding habits, so knowing the location and status of berries will dictate when and where to hunt. Ferry County and GMU 105 in northern Stevens County are excellent bear hunting areas. The season continues to open August 1 in the Huckleberry Unit (121) and Mount Spokane Unit, (124). In Spokane County, scout Mica Peak and areas north of the Spokane River for wild apple trees on old homesteads, or look for huckleberry patches. Predator calling can also be an effective way to hunt black bear.

Southeast Washington’s Blue Mountains has a high black bear population, but hunting will be difficult due to few and scattered natural foraging areas. Scout for old orchards, huckleberry fields, hawthorn thickets, plum thickets, and blackberry patches. Hunters are reminded that the bear season opening date for this area has been changed from August 1 to September 5.

Black bear populations appear healthy in **northcentral** and southcentral Washington and hunting should be good. However, the number of complaints about bear damage or other problems — a relative indicator of populations — is lower this year than last. In the **north Puget Sound** region, private timber lands should be good bear hunting places for hunters who gain permission to bike or hike behind closed gates. Two bears can be harvested throughout western Washington; check the hunting rules pamphlet on page 28 for details.

Black bears are found throughout the **southwest** region, but the Willapa Hills and the lower hills of eastern Lewis County have the largest populations. High bear numbers and damage from bears have been reported on the Weyerhaeuser Vail tree farm, particularly in the Thompson and Hanaford drainage. Interested hunters should contact the Weyerhaeuser toll free access line at 800-361-5602.

In the **coastal** region of the Olympic Peninsula bear populations continue to do well. Hunters should key in on open forest areas that are producing trailing blackberries, or on large huckleberry openings. Higher elevation ridges surrounding Olympic National Park offer openings where bears will be foraging in late August and September. Along the coast, openings around cedar swamps and natural prairies where crabapple and cascara thrive offer good opportunities.



Just How Big Is Big?

George Tsukamoto

Big game animals with antlers (deer, elk & moose) and horns (wild sheep & goat) have held a fascination and been admired by man throughout history. The chance to take a large antlered or horned game animal plays on the hunters thoughts and dreams. Hunters in the field are more likely to judge the size of antlers by the overall spread or number of points or even the height of a rack. A common gauge used to determine a trophy mule deer is the 30+ inch spread value. Unfortunately, the spread alone is a poor measure of trophy quality because it does not account for massiveness, length of points or symmetry.

The Boone and Crockett Club, an organization founded by Teddy Roosevelt in 1888, devised a method of measuring and judging animals for their size and symmetry. Their scoring system measures the growth of antlers and horns to the nearest 1/8 inch. Both length of antler points and circumferences at key locations are made to determine girth or massiveness. These measurements are totaled to provide the gross score. Deductions for differences between measurements on left and right antler or horn are made to account for symmetry. Total inches of growth minus deductions result in the B&C score. Minimum point scores have been established for entry into the record books. This system is now the accepted standard for judging “trophy” quality of North American big game animals. The Boone and Crockett scoring system is now used to judge trophies taken by bow and arrow (Pope and Young Club) and by primitive black powder firearms (Longhunter).

Washington has the distinction of providing the World Record black-tailed deer. Lester H. Miller took this trophy in Lewis County in 1953. The following are the number one Washington records for deer and elk categories from the state of Washington.

Big Game	B & C Score		Hunter	County	Year	Overall Rank	B & C Minimum
mule deer - typical	202	0/8	Howard W. Hoskins	Chelan	1970	172	190
mule deer - nontypical	266	1/8	Joe C. Mally	Stevens	1933	81	230
black-tailed deer	182	2/8	Lester H. Miller	Lewis	1953	1	135
white-tailed deer - typical	181	7/8	George A. Cook III	Whitman	1985	172	170
white-tailed deer - nontypical	234	4/8	Larry G. Gardner	Stevens	1953	89	195
American elk - typical	420	4/8	Charles F. Gunnier	Yakima	1990	4	375
American elk - nontypical	420	4/8	Stan Orr	Yakima	1933	7	385
Roosevelt elk - typical	380	6/8	Sam Argo	Jefferson	1983	3	290

Each organization has official measures who score legally taken animals for listing in their respective record books. If you need a official measurement for a trophy contact the following;

- Boone and Crockett Club, Missoula MT. (Any legal means) (406) 542-1888
- Pope and Young Club (archery only), Chatfield, MN (507) 867-4144
- Longhunter (muzzleloader only), Friendship, IN (812) 667-5731

Mountain Goat Populations are Declining

By: Donny Marterello, Carnivore/ Special Species Section Manager



Historically, mountain goat abundance in Washington may have been as high as 10,000. However, goat populations have been declining for several years and now there are probably fewer than 4,000. As a result, WDFW has taken a conservative management approach and reduced the number of goat permits in recent years.

So what’s causing the decline in statewide goat levels? The long-term decline, even with a conservative harvest, suggests that mountain goat habitat conditions are deteriorating. Mountain goats prefer mid to high elevation habitats with steep, rocky cliffs, projecting pinnacles, ledges and an occasional talus slide. Historically, these open habitats were maintained through natural fires and other disturbances. However, given the fire suppression

policy for most public lands in Washington, forests may be closing in on prime goat habitat. With less quality habitat, the land base just can’t support the number of goats it once did.

But why are there so few hunting permits, some goat populations are stable or increasing? In terms of the reduced goat permits in recent years, habitat factors are just one side of the equation. Practicing responsible management, WDFW recommends not hunting any wildlife population when critical data on population status and dynamics are lacking. And due to funding constraints, the Department is unable to survey every mountain goat population in the state. Recognizing the marginal status of goats statewide, the Department elected not to recommend recreational hunting opportunity in any area not surveyed. What’s the result of this decision? In some cases a sustainable goat population could allow for limited harvest opportunity, but that opportunity won’t be realized without adequate survey information.

So what’s being done to restore goat populations statewide? In the coming years, the Department hopes to gather more information on mountain goat status and population dynamics. We currently are pursuing funding sources to better survey goats and estimate statewide population status. Our goal is to restore goat populations to their historic levels and again provide quality aesthetic and recreation opportunities in Washington.

Upland Birds will Provide Mixed Bag

Forest grouse, pheasant, quail, and partridge numbers may be very poor this fall. With another mild winter, broodstock numbers of most species were healthy this spring. But a late, cold, wet, and long spring in many parts of the state could offset that with loss of hatchlings. WDFW biologists will have a better picture after late summer surveys so watch for updates through the media.



In the eastern region, the best areas for ruffed grouse are the forested streamside habitats in the north, from the Canadian border through Spokane County. Generally the best pheasant hunting is in the canyons along the Snake and Palouse Rivers in Whitman County. Pheasant releases will be available again at selected sites; check the regional offices for details. Chukar partridge are nearly exclusively found in the breaks of the Snake River, especially from Central Ferry upstream to the Oregon border.

The forecast for pheasant hunting in the northcentral region, including the Columbia Basin, is based primarily on brood surveys run the last two weeks of July and the first two weeks of August – not available at this writing. Preliminary indications based on a limited number of April surveys suggest very low numbers of adult pheasant in the Columbia Basin. That is usually a harbinger of poor pheasant production for the year and therefore, poor hunting this fall. WDFW will release approximately 5000 pen-raised roosters at pheasant release sites throughout the region.

In the southcentral region, quail populations rebounded in 1998 after being relatively low in 1997. Winter survival was above average and there seemed to be good brood stock this spring, but time and weather (and early fall reports) will tell.

In western Washington, hunters can anticipate a fair to poor forest grouse year because the entire spring season was wet and windy.

Waterfowl hunting, continued from page 1

Wildlife Area near Ferndale continues to provide waterfowl hunting and agreements with industrial neighbors Arco and Intalco means additional land and water access is available.

Brant hunters need to look for changes in brant hunting dates. WDFW is considering season changes that would conserve the light bellied stock of brant.

The southwest region’s best duck hunting conditions occur after the fall rains improve water availability in the lowlands of Clark, Cowlitz and Lewis counties. Late November through January is normally the peak time for waterfowl numbers here. Coastal hunting can be very good early in the season.

Production of the Dusky Canada goose remains poor, showing the continued need for conservation measures. A quota hunt will continue to be in place this fall in Goose Management Area 2. The goal is for NO harvest of Dusks, so that the season for other sub-species of Canada geese may extend into January to reduce crop depredations on local farmlands. Again this year hunting procedures require ALL hunters to be certified for goose hunting during the general season in Goose Management Area 2. Hunters certified last year are valid for 2000, and need not retake the test unless their certification was revoked by the Department.



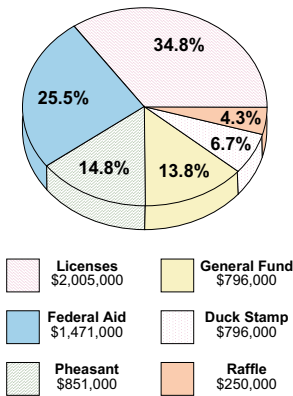
Game Management Division Budget for Fiscal Years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001

Dave Ware

Where the Money Comes From - Game Management Division Source of Funds:

Federal Aid: Pittman-Robertson Act federal excise tax on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment	\$ 1,471,000
Licenses: Hunter license and tag fees collected by WDFW	2,005,000
Pheasant: Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement	851,000
Duck stamp: Habitat acquisition/enhancement	387,000
Raffles/Auctions: Big game projects	250,000
General Fund:	
A) Southwestern Washington Goose Management	195,000
B) Puget Sound Ambient Monitoring Program	404,000
C) Waterfowl Management	99,000
D) Elk Survey Enhancement	100,000
Total Two Year Budget	\$ 5,762,000

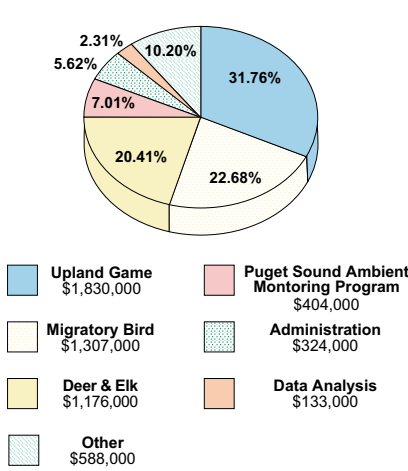
Source of Funds



Where the Money is Spent - Game Management Division expenditures:

Administration	\$ 194,000
Hunting Pamphlets	130,000
Upland Game/Furbearer Management	292,000
Game Farm	687,000
Pheasant Enhancement	851,000
Deer/Elk Management	1,066,000
Auction/Raffle	110,000
Migratory Bird Management	725,000
Duck Stamp	387,000
Dusky Goose Management	195,000
Puget Sound Ambient Monitoring Program	404,000
Black bear, Cougar, Sheep, Goat and Moose	330,000
Sheep and Moose Auction/Raffle	258,000
Game Survey Coordination and Data Analysis	133,000
Total	\$ 5,762,000

Expenses



Accomplishments:

Besides the normal activities of the Game Management Division that are completed annually such as conducting wildlife surveys, establishing recommendations for hunting seasons, and conducting hunter surveys to estimate harvest and hunter effort some other significant accomplishments were completed. Here are a few highlights:

A new three year hunting season package for the years 2000-2002 was passed by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The Game Management Advisory Council, a group of 20 private citizens, was very active in advising the Department about hunting season issues as the three year package was being developed.

Game Species Status Reports are produced each year and are available to the public.

Many game species population management programs were accomplished through trapping and transplanting of elk at Hanford, bighorn sheep from British Columbia, wild turkeys from Iowa and within state, and sharp-tailed grouse from Idaho and the Colville Tribe.

The eastern Washington pheasant enhancement program resulted in the release of 20,000 pheasants per year in eastern Washington and provided about \$120,000 in habitat grants.

The Migratory Bird Stamp program initiated several new habitat projects for morning doves, in addition to completing waterfowl orientated projects throughout the state.

Population estimates for buck deer are being improved through a buck mortality study and elk population estimates are being improved through more intensive surveys in the Olympic, north and south Rainier herds in cooperation with treaty tribes.

Coordinated State/Tribal Elk Herd Plans will be completed by the December 2000. Public comment opportunities will be announced and available on the agency's Web site.

A trapping fact sheet has been developed to answer questions about Initiative 713 which would ban the use of foot hold traps. The Division is participating in a trap testing program with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to address humane trapping techniques.

This is the third edition of Game Trails with fall hunting season prospects and game division information. This form of communication greatly enhances the agency's ability to provide information to the public.

New License and Mandatory Reporting System

By now you may have heard, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is proposing a new license sales system called WILD (for *Washington Interactive Licensing DataBase*). Beginning in 2001, when you purchase your hunting license and transport tag at a WDFW dealer or regional/headquarter's office, expect the clerk to enter your information into a small computer screen that is linked to the license database. Once the transaction is complete, your information and purchases will be instantaneously recorded and updated in the database. This new online system also will incorporate the added convenience of purchasing your licenses and tags with a credit card by telephone or Internet. To finance the new computerized system, license buyers will be charged a 9.5% transaction fee. Additionally, federal law will require social security numbers to be collected at the time of license issuance as a child support enforcement measure.

Coupled with WILD is *Mandatory Reporting* of all hunting activity for deer, elk, black bear, and turkey, whether an animal was harvested or not. For convenience and ease of use, two methods of reporting your hunting activity will be available; telephone reporting via a live operator or web-based reporting via the Internet. For both reporting methods, expect to answer questions about:

- which game species you hunted,
- which Game Management Units you hunted,
- the number of days you hunted, and
- whether or not you harvested an animal.

So what's the benefit of these new systems? The WILD and *Mandatory Reporting* systems will provide wildlife managers with faster and better information for managing game species in Washington State. All this translates to improved estimates of total harvest, hunting pressure, and other measures used to develop hunting season and quota recommendations. But ultimately it's even more than that, it's an improvement in the sound management of wildlife species which allows wildlife professionals to make better decisions from better information.

More detailed information on the new systems will be available in January. But expect to see WILD and *Mandatory Reporting* by April of 2001.



WDFW Deer Study with Colville Tribes, Chelan PUD, and Other Cooperatives

by Woody Myers, Wildlife Research Biologist



WDFW just began a five-year research study to learn more about mule deer populations in northeast and north-central Washington.

The study, which includes parts of Chelan, Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens, Lincoln, and Pend Oreille counties, represents a cooperative effort of a number of agencies and organizations, including the Colville Confederated Tribes, Chelan Public Utility District (PUD), Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, the Washington Chapter of The Mule Deer Foundation, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Colville, Okanogan, and Wenatchee National Forests.

To date, 34 mule deer does have been captured and marked with radio-telemetry collars to allow monitoring of their movements. The

monitoring will help determine habitat use, herd boundaries and home range sizes, population densities, and mortality rates, patterns, and causes. Blood samples and measurements taken when the deer were captured will also help determine health and productivity. Several hundred mule deer will be marked with radio equipment or colored collars throughout the study period.

Although WDFW is the lead agency for coordinating and completing the study, field work assistance comes from a variety of sources, including Colville Tribal biologists, graduate students from the University of Washington and University of Idaho, and interested volunteers from across the state.

The study is being designed by WDFW deer specialists to identify population regulation mechanisms within mule deer herds across eastern Washington's varied landscapes. It is designed to tie reproductive performance to habitat condition and trends and relate that performance to mortality rates including hunting.

The general trend has been a declining mule deer population in Washington. Yet some areas, like parts of Douglas and Grant Counties, have shown increased mule deer numbers. It seems that one size may not fit all when it comes to managing mule deer because they occupy a variety of habitats in eastern Washington.

Changes in 2000-2001 Big Game Hunting Seasons

By: Rolf Johnson, Deer and Elk Section Manager

This is the first year of the new three-year hunting season package; major changes in hunting seasons were contemplated and evaluated. Many of the changes initially considered were dropped after thorough review and public comment, but those adopted include the following:

Early muzzleloader seasons were reduced from seven to five days, but the number of units open was more than doubled. In 1999 only 22 Game Management Units (GMUs) were open to early muzzleloader deer, but this year 50 GMUs are open to early muzzleloader deer seasons.

The biggest change this year for elk hunting is consolidating all the eastside tag areas into one tag area. Our elk tags were printed before the hunting seasons were adopted so the tags still read Blue Mountains, Northeast, Yakima, and Colockum. Any of these tags are now valid in all the open eastern Washington units.

The Hanford elk population continues to grow and damage concerns are escalating. Elk seasons have been expanded in GMUs 372 (Kiona) and 382 (East Klickitat) for modern firearm hunters. See the modern firearm elk seasons section in the Big Game Hunting Seasons and Rules pamphlet for restrictions. Nearly all of these areas are private property so hunters should scout the area early and get permission to hunt.

Bull ratios are up in some areas and down in others. All branched bull permits in the Colockum were dropped this year because of poor bull escapement. Branched bull permits in the Yakima and Blue Mountains units varied by GMU consistent with bull escapement ratios.

Elk hunting in GMU 371 (Alkali) is by permit only this year. There are 100 permits for modern firearm, 50 for archery, and 100 for muzzleloader to help control elk expansion into the Yakima Firing Center.

A number of new damage permit hunts were adopted this year to control damage problems. Many of these special permit hunts are for muzzleloader only, but some are for archery and modern firearm.

The hair loss syndrome in western Washington black-tailed deer is adversely affecting populations in some areas. All antlerless deer hunting has been eliminated in five southwest GMUs and permit numbers reduced in others. In response to improving buck numbers, late buck opportunity in three new units in Klickitat County, has been opened on a permit only basis.

More buck permits are available this year in north central Washington in response to improving mule deer buck ratios. The special deer permits for Persons of Disability and Advanced Hunter Education (AHE) Graduates have been dropped this year. Many new road access opportunities for Persons of Disability are available this year. Also, general white-tail, three point minimum, or antlerless opportunities are available in the Blue Mountains this year for Persons of Disability. Advanced hunter deer opportunities have been changed from permit only special permits to focus on damage issues. A new general season hunt for AHE graduates is available in GMUs 127-142 for antlerless white-tail December 9-15.

Access to private lands is a growing problem for Washington hunters. Please treat landowners with respect so your return visit will be welcome.

Cougar Numbers Remain High

Cougar numbers remain high or even on the increase, as indicated by WDFW population reconstruction modeling from the sex and age of harvested animals. Incidental cougar take continues to increase, with deer and elk hunters purchasing cougar tags with the hope of seeing one while hunting, or cutting a fresh cat track and stalking one.



Cougar hunting prospects remain bright for this season and opportunistic hunters are advised to carry a cougar tag. Hunters can increase their chance of success by specifically pursuing cougar using a predator call or by tracking in fresh snow.

Hanford Area Elk Trans-located

Last winter 157 elk were captured on the Hanford Arid Lands Ecological Reserve and re-located to Northeastern Washington and the Blue Mountains. Here the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is working on enhancing both elk habitat and populations. Major project cooperators include the Pend Oreille County Sportsmen's Club, the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Energy, Battelle Corp., Yakama Indian Nation, and the Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife.

Since elk naturally colonized the Hanford Area beginning in the early 1970's, their population there has grown to such a high level in recent years that they could potentially damage their range as well as surrounding private farm lands. Hence, 82 elk were live-captured in February and March of 2000 and released into Pend Oreille County. An additional 75 elk were captured and released into the Blue Mountains in early March.

Out of the 157 trans-located elk, 22 yearling or adult cows, were outfitted with radio transmitters. There were 13 radio-transmitted elk released in northeastern Washington. These animals have been faithfully tracked every week since release by volunteers from the Pend Oreille County Sportsmen Club. Only two of these transmitted elk have died, one within a few days following release from Cougar predation. The other eleven are still emitting normal radio signals. There have been good indications that many have mixed in with "native" northeastern elk which should enhance the probability of their survival and reproduction. None of the radio-transmitted elk have migrated further than approximately 10 air miles beyond the original respective release site for each.

In the Blue Mountains there were 9 radio-telemetered elk released on March 7 and 8, 2000. Two of these animals died within several days of release probably due to capture-related problems. The other seven have remained with other elk within 20 air miles of the release site. These elk have integrated with resident elk within the Lick Creek area. Hanford-released elk in the Blue Mountains are being monitored by personnel with the WDFW along with volunteers from the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council.

Planning and coordination are currently taking place for carrying out a second capture and transplant effort in early 2001.



Elk Hunting Simplified

There's nothing simple about elk hunting, except for Washington's new two-tag system this year. Elk hunters either hunt western or eastern Washington, as defined by the crest of Cascade Mountains. When the change was made this spring, the old five-tag system was still reflected in the printed tags. But any Northeast, Blues, Colockum, or Yakima tag is good on the eastside, and west is still west. Elk herd population status varies tremendously across the state, but overall hunting prospects are fair to good. In general, eastern Washington has spike bull only general seasons and western Washington has 3 point minimum antler general bull seasons.

In the far **northeast** portion of the **Selkirk** herd, elk populations continue to recover from the winter losses of 96/97, but hunter success is always relatively low due to the abundance of escape cover for widely scattered, small groups of animals. Fresh snow during the season will likely play a greater role in success than the number of elk in the herd. The translocation of about 80 elk from Hanford to Pend Oreille County has proven successful. But only cows and calves were moved here, so other than the few bull calves, there won't be increased opportunity yet. Because of the elk transplant, antlerless permits were eliminated for 2000 in most of the area. There is either-sex hunting opportunity for elk hunters in the "elk damage areas" (GMU's 101, 105, 121, 124 W of Highway 395).

The **Blue Mountains** elk herd populations have improved in most areas, with the exception of the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness (unit 169). Hunter success rates will average about 5%, which is consistent with success rates experienced in the 1990's, but below the 10% success rates experienced in the late 1980's. This is a spike bull only area, and low calf survival in some parts of the Blues continues to reduce the number of spike bulls available for harvest.

The **Yakima** herd numbers over 13,000 elk. Spike-only bull elk general season hunting and branched-antlered bull by-permit-only management has been very successful. The management objective of those restrictions is to achieve ratios of 12 antlered bulls per 100 cows after the hunting season, and progress is being made to reach that level.

The outlook isn't as rosy for the **Colockum** herd. Calf production and bull ratios are below normal and all branched bull permits have been discontinued this year. The Colockum has some of the most open habitat in the state and elk are vulnerable to over harvest.

Western Washington elk hunting has a three point antler restriction in most general seasons, but some damage areas have other opportunities. In the Puget Sound area elk populations are down and hunting opportunities are limited. The White River unit (653) of Pierce County, located just north of Mt. Rainier National Park, changed the numbers from 472 to 653, but it is the same unit. Harvest success in this area depends on the amount of snow that falls before and after the state established seasons. Elk leave the park only when snowfall in late fall forces them back to lower elevations where they are available to hunters. The Snoqualmie unit (460) has small scattered elk groups that are slowly increasing in size. Persistent hunters who scout effectively can expect to be rewarded with uncrowded hunting conditions and an opportunity to harvest older bulls.

Elk hunting in the Green River Watershed (GMU 485), Nooksack unit GMU 418 and Sauk, GMU 437 remains closed.

In **southwest** Washington the St. helens elk herd is the second largest in the state. Margaret and Toutle areas remain open only by permit, but other units are open for 3 point or better bulls in the general seasons. Concern over declining populations in several of the units that experience the most harvest pressure, has led to a reduction in cow elk harvest allocation. Managers are striving to reduce cow harvest by at least 50% in units 506 (Willapa Hills), 520 (Winston), and 530 (Ryderwood). To achieve this goal, modern firearm permits were cut in half and cow elk harvest was limited to the early archery season. A precipitous decline of the South Rainier elk herd since 1994 has led to an elimination of antlerless harvest in units 510 (Stormking), 513 (South Rainier), and 516 (Packwood). Loss of habitat and high harvest pressure have led to this decline. Unfortunately, however, as is becoming increasingly the case, damage concerns in some of the wintering range of this herd have led to formulation of new elk damage hunts. These hunts will target specific groups of elk, hopefully alleviating the damage problem and not contributing to the general decline of elk in these units.

The winter in **southwest** Washington was mild, and relative to the previous two winters, snowfall levels were low in the middle elevations of the Cascades resulting in excellent winter survival. Due to increasing problems with vandalism and garbage dumping, more private timber owners have been placing gates on roads, many open only during hunting seasons. The closures have provided better conditions for wildlife, which should mean greater hunting success for those willing to walk behind gates.

Historically, pre-season ratios of 19 to 33 bulls per 100 cows have been counted in the southwest's 3-point units. Based upon last year's harvest and present habitat conditions, ratios are likely to be comparable this year. Access to private lands may be limited, however, due to fire danger and landowner road closures. The best bets for early hunting will be smaller openings and clearcuts, near small patches of mature timber.

In the **coastal** region of the Olympic Peninsula, elk populations have declined about 40% over the last ten years. WDFW has spent the last three years working with Peninsula tribes on needed harvest reductions and elk populations appear to be responding. Historically, pre-season ratios of 15 to 35 bulls per 100 cows have been counted in Olympic



Turn in a Poacher and Earn Bonus Points

George Tsukamoto

Poachers beware! The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission passed a rule in 1997 that rewards persons who provide information which substantially contributes to the arrest of another person for illegally killing big game or endangered species. Hunters have been keeping their eyes open while in the field because of the new rewards program. Persons who provide information are given an option of a cash award or up to 10 bonus points for special deer or elk permit hunt drawings.

This reward system was patterned after a program developed in the State of Utah. Their experience showed a significant reduction in "trophy" poaching activity in well known and desirable special permit hunt areas. Hunters are actively engaged in "patrolling" these areas to turn in a poacher.

Officials of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife believes the new incentive of bonus points as a reward will be an effective tool to combat poaching. Fish and Wildlife Commission member Lisa Pelly said, "We have added one more incentive for hunters to be aware of poaching activities and to report them."

Since it's inception bonus point rewards have more than doubled. The chance of being a successful applicant in the special permit drawings are substantially increased with the addition of 10 bonus points allotted under the rewards program. Keep you eyes and ears open and don't let a poacher steal our valued wildlife resources. Turn them in and be rewarded.

Elk hunting, continued

3-point units. As numbers of elk have responded to reduced antlerless harvest by the state and tribes, more legal bulls have been seen in surveys. Based upon last year's harvest and present habitat conditions, hunting is likely to improve over the last couple years.

This year the Dickey (GMU 602) will be open for general archery, muzzleloader, and modern firearm seasons for the first time in 15 years. Permit only seasons were the rule here the last few years. Pre-season bull ratios are similar to other surrounding units but many low elevation, brushy, thick, swampy areas provide some older bulls hiding places. They also make for difficult hunting conditions. Most areas have brush higher than your head and lots of escape cover for the elk with few openings for a clear shot. If you are prepared and willing to deal with this, bull elk hunting could be surprisingly good for you here.

The best hunting opportunities should be in the southern and eastern part of the region where elk are expanding. The Bear River unit (681) and North River unit (658) should be good again this year. Elk are expanding their range in the Skookumchuck unit and some local elk are now spending the winter on private farms causing damage problems. The Minot Peak unit (660) holds the Chehalis Valley elk sub-herd during spring, summer, and fall. This growing herd now numbers more than 200 and will provide good opportunity this year for archers, muzzleloaders, and modern firearm hunters.

The Willapa Hills area should offer good hunting again this year. Much of the area has road access restrictions that limit vehicle entry. Best hunting opportunities are in these areas where vehicle disturbance is avoided. Most hunters hunt less than a mile from roads and the energetic hunter is often rewarded by seeing more elk.

Continued next column



Chelan Bighorn

Bighorn have returned to Lake Chelan after being gone for the last 100 years. Bighorn were once common along the eastern flank of the Cascades, as well as the Columbia and Snake River breaks in Washington. Washington's native bighorn were wiped out in the 1900's mostly as a result of disease and over harvesting. The most serious of these diseases is pneumonia caused by pasteurilla bacteria.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife began reintroducing bighorn to historic habitat in 1957. Currently Washington supports about 1250 bighorn in 13 herds. The most recently reestablished is the Lake Chelan Herd. Washington Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) negotiated purchase of a forest grazing allotment in March of 1999. Six days after the grazing permit was waived, 13 California bighorn from Lincoln Cliffs and Quilomene were released along the north shore of Lake Chelan near Falls Creek. In the year since the initial reintroduction, additional bighorn have been released bringing total reintroduced bighorn on Lake Chelan to 47.

Reintroduced bighorn seem to be adapting well to Lake Chelan. They have spread out from their release point and are using about 10 miles of lake front between Safety Harbor and Mitchell Creek. Volunteers spotted six new lambs along Lake Chelan in mid May.



The Washington Outdoor Women Program

Ronnie McGlenn

Washington Outdoor Women (WOW) is an exciting success story. There is no other program designed for women in Washington dedicated to teaching outdoor skills that includes big game hunting, fishing and shooting sports instruction. A corp of volunteer coordinators have been able to organize a one day shell fish workshop on Hood Canal, a one day shotgun/clay targets workshop, three 2 ½ day (weekend) workshops across the state. On September 15-17, 2000 volunteer coordinators are gearing up for 110 participants at a 2 ½ day workshop at Camp Waskowitz near North Bend.

The September WOW program will offer 18 outdoor skills: archery, backpacking and camping, fishing, birding, canoeing, fly tying, fly fishing, big game hunting/wildlife conservation, Dutch oven cooking, a Challenge-by-Choice course, outdoor photography I and II, packing with horses, personal preparedness, shotgun/clay target shooting, survival skills/map and compass reading, wildlife identification, and wild edibles and wilderness medicine.

During the weekend workshops the participants choose 3 four-hour hands-on courses and everyone takes a personal preparedness course that deals with accessing the outdoors, and introduces self-defense assessment and decision making when encountering cougar and bear.

The one-day work shops run 6-8 hours with focused instruction on a specific skill. WOW's Shotgun/Clay Target Shooting workshop is kept to a minimum of 10 participants due to our policy of one-on-one certified instruction. Throughout the workshops, outdoor ethics is a frequently mentioned topic. Also, demonstrations are interspersed between course presentations that both entertain and educate. There is a Wild Game Tasting session for everyone. This provides opportunity for a discussion about the "big picture and whole story" of hunting.

WOW is an organization dedicated to teaching women a variety of outdoor skills; helping them to achieve confidence and competence in these activities through a series of hands-on workshops taught in a supporting, informative, and relevant setting. This mission statement emphasizes hands-on learning and to teach values equal to skills.

The participation fee for a 2 ½ day workshop is \$175. The fee covers lodging, food, logistics and off site transportation for the participants. Because the staff are all volunteers, workshop funds go right back into the program. WOW is a 501 (c) (3) non profit organization. Scholarship funding will hopefully be provided again this year through a grant from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Scholarship preference is given to low income applicants, single mothers, and full-time students (\$125 scholarship plus \$50 personal contribution). We try for at least 10% scholarship attendance.

Visit our web site at <www.oow.com/wow> or call for more detailed information.



Spokane County Moose Research Shows Population Growth

By Woody Myers, Wildlife Research Biologist

For the past two years, WDFW has been learning that the Spokane County area moose population is growing more rapidly than previously estimated.

A moose census was conducted using a method of counting moose from a helicopter developed in Idaho and Wyoming. It divides the study area, (which includes part of Idaho, with Mount Spokane as the center), into quadrats that are sampled at different rates based upon moose densities. This method helped us determine that the study area has about 180 moose – more than double other estimates based on anecdotal information. It also shows a ratio of 28 bulls per 100 cows and 48 calves per 100 cows ratio; the cow-calf ratio is another indicator of a growing moose population.

Based on this new information, we were able to add 15 antlerless only moose hunting permits to the Mount Spokane unit this year.

With help from Inland Northwest Wildlife Council volunteers and Eastern Washington University graduate students, we've also equipped up to 26 moose in the area with radio telemetry collars to monitor their survival and movements. About 14 are still on the air in the area, with others lost to death (one poaching in Idaho and one legal harvest by a Washington youth hunter), shed radios, or movements outside the monitoring area.

The information we gained from the radio monitoring includes an annual survival rate of 95 percent for cow moose (not enough bull moose are radioed to calculate a survival rate.) We also learned that most radio-marked cows are giving birth to twin calves, and many move into lower-lying areas near water to do so.

Dozens of moose that have wandered into the city of Spokane have also been marked with ear tags when they inevitably require relocating to more appropriate habitat. Although not as precise as radio tracking, the ear tags may begin to give us a picture of movements or repeated behavior by individuals over time.

Take Care of that Game Meat!

Hunting always requires some advanced planning and equipment check. Big game hunting requires some special preparation in the event you are successful. Hunting isn't over until you have completed the process of dressing, transporting and caring for the animal. For the novice hunter these final important tasks are often the most daunting of the hunt.

The Washington State University Cooperative Extension has an excellent booklet entitled, *Big Game from Hunt to Home*, by W. Daniel Edge, Jan R. Busboom and Carolyn A. Raab. This 44-page booklet has many very helpful hints and instruction for all hunters, experienced and novice. It is available from the Bulletins Office, Washington State University, P.O. Box 645912, Pullman, Washington 99164-5912 or via telephone 1-800-723-1763. Its modest price of \$2.50 plus handling is well worth the investment.



The Future of Hunting in America

By Rolf Johnson

Recently, I read with interest from a brochure entitled *Big Game Hunting - The Future of Hunting in America*, by Stephani Kenyon and Mark Damian Duda. According to the authors, “*Big game hunting in America is more popular today than it has ever been at any other time in our history. Surprising news for sure, especially given the undercurrent of anti-hunting attitudes fueled by animal rights propaganda. No doubt some misinformed individuals have led people to believe hunting is an activity that is not supported by the American public and have misled others to assume big game hunting is a sport in decline. But in truth much of the ‘controversy’ is based on fiction. The best way to debunk these negative and misleading notions about hunting is to take a look at the facts.*”

Big Game Hunters Nationally Compared to Washington State

Year	United States	Washington State	% of US Total	
1955	1,579,704	302,847	19.2	*U.S.Fish and Wildlife Service Bureau of Census. 1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.
1960	1,526,585	289,845	18.9	
1965	1,737,452	307,420	17.7	
1970	3,209,185	334,763	10.4	** 1955-1985 data is comparable and 1991-1996 is comparable. However, 1955-1985 data is not directly comparable with 1991-1996 data due to changes in survey methodology. The number of big game hunters from 1955-1985 are those 12 years-old and older while 1991-1996 data are those 16 years-old and older.
1975	5,168,708	338,870	6.6	
1980	6,876,092	356,500	5.2	
1985	6,494,911	270,354	4.2	
1991*	10,745,000	263,658	2.5	***Washington Hunting license sale figures. Deer and elk tag sales represent 80-90% of hunting license sales.
1996**	11,288,000	254,666 ***	2.3	

Big Game Hunter Trends in Washington State

The table above shows that Big Game License sales in Washington State differ from the national trend. We reached peak license sales in 1980 and have declined over 100,000 since then. Most hunters in Washington hunt deer and/or elk. Deer and elk population numbers increased in Washington until about 1980 and since then both deer and elk numbers have declined. The national trends in big game hunter numbers reflect White-tail deer population increase in the eastern half of the U.S. The steep decline of Washington hunters as a % of the U.S. total is alarming.

Why Is Big Game Hunting Growing Nationally?

It is believed that big game populations through out the U.S. are now at historically high levels. Thanks to the support of hunters, conservationists, and advances in wildlife management techniques that wildlife indeed are at high levels.

- Wild turkey populations have increased from 1.3 million in 1973 to 5.2 million in 1999 according to information provided by The National Wild Turkey Federation.
- White-tailed deer populations have increased to more than 33 million according to the White-tailed deer Institute.
- Elk are more numerous today than at any other time since 1900 and occupy more suitable habitat than ever before. It is estimated that elk in America number more than 1.2 million. Fewer than 100,000 elk existed in the late 1800s. (Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation)

According to Kenyon and Duda, “*The rise in big game hunting is not new- it’s a trend that has been mounting and gaining speed for many years. Its growth has been consistent, increasing seven-fold since the 1950’s. Hunting is worth \$61 billion annually to the U.S. economy, with big game hunting being the dominant component of the industry*” according to a study conducted by Southwick Associates of Alexandria, VA.

A study conducted by Responsive Management, Harrisonburg, VA, on the attitudes of American hunters revealed that American’s either strongly approve (40%) or moderately approve (33%) of legal hunting.



Swans and Canada Geese on the Skagit

Photo by Mike O'Malley

Changes in Nontoxic Shot Restrictions for Upland Bird Hunters

By: Don Kraege, Waterfowl Section Manager

If you’re a waterfowl hunter, you’re probably aware that waterfowl can die if they eat spent lead shot pellets in their feeding areas. Lead shot is extremely toxic to waterfowl, with one #6 pellet enough to kill a duck under certain conditions. Swans are the most visible evidence of lead poisoning, due to their habit of feeding deep within wetlands that have lead pellets still remaining from past years. Bald eagles and other raptors can be poisoned by feeding on other wildlife containing lead shot. Problems with the use of lead shot were discovered by extensive testing during the 1970’s and 1980’s, which led to a phase-out of lead shot as an allowable waterfowl load during 1986-1991.

If lead shot is toxic to waterfowl and other wildlife, why is lead still allowed for hunting other game birds in areas where waterfowl and other wildlife have access to spent lead pellets? Monitoring has found problems on some pheasant release sites in western Washington that are also waterfowl feeding areas. Nontoxic shot has been required at the Skagit Wildlife Area pheasant release site since 1988, when soil sampling found an estimated 6.8 tons of lead on the site. This site is planted with barley each year, and ducks feed several inches into saturated soil looking for food and grit. Sampling at the Voice of America site in Clallam County estimated 1.5 tons of lead on the site last year. Sampling lead pellet densities in soil and waterfowl tissues is the best way to document problem areas, but these methods are labor intensive, expensive, and sometimes difficult to interpret. Due to these limitations, sampling has been limited.

Some of the main concerns we’ve heard about using nontoxic shot include cost, effectiveness, and shotgun barrel damage. Currently, six nontoxic shot alternatives exist, and more are being developed. Costs of alternatives are more expensive than lead shot, particularly newer alternatives which can cost over \$2 per shell. However, steel shot prices have declined and are approaching those of lead shot. Prices of newer alternatives are expected to decline as new shot types become more widely available. In numerous shooting tests, wounding loss from the use of steel shot has been scientifically proven to be no different from that of lead. Poor performance of steel is often related to mismatched load/choke combinations and exceeding the effective range of loads. Fears about barrel damage from nontoxic shot have not been substantiated for the vast majority of shotguns (check with your manufacturer to be sure). Several of the new alternatives have ballistics properties similar to lead, eliminating these concerns.

At the April 2000 Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting, 11 sites were converted to nontoxic shot use based on a high potential for ingestion of lead by wildlife. These sites will be posted and listed in the new waterfowl and upland game seasons pamphlet. In addition to this action, the Commission directed WDFW to evaluate the use of nontoxic shot for all game bird hunting in the future. WDFW is currently preparing a report to assess the need for nontoxic shot restrictions for hunting all game species, to be presented at the January 2001 workshop of the Fish and Wildlife Commission.